

THE EDUCATION OF SONS OF GOD NO. 2722

**A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, APRIL 14, 1901
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON
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"Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered."
Hebrews 5:8

WERE you ever in a new trouble, one which was so strange that you felt that a similar trial had never happened to you, and moreover, you dreamt that such a temptation had never assailed anybody else? I should not wonder if that was the thought of your troubled heart.

And did you ever walk out upon that lonely desert island upon which you were wrecked and say, "I am alone—*alone*—ALONE—nobody was ever here before me"? And did you suddenly pull up short as you noticed, in the sand, the footprints of a man? I remember right well passing through that experience—and when I looked, lo! it was not merely the footprints of a man that I saw, but I thought I knew whose feet had left those imprints.

They were the marks of One who had been crucified, for there was the print of the nails. So I thought to myself, "If He has been here, it is no longer a desert island. As His blessed feet once trod this wilderness-way, it blossoms now like the rose, and it becomes to my troubled spirit as a very garden of the Lord."

My object, in this discourse, will be to try to point out the footprints of Jesus in the sands of sorrow, that others of the children of God may have their hearts lifted up within them while they observe that "though he were a Son, yet he," as well as the rest of us who are in the Lord's family, "learned obedience by the things which he suffered."

I. I ask your attention, first of all, to that which, I doubt not, you would have observed in the text without any help from me, namely, that OUR REDEEMER'S SONSHIP DID NOT EXEMPT HIM FROM SUFFERING.

"Though he were a Son." It is put as if this might have been a case where the rod of the household could have been spared. That there should be suffering for enemies, that there should be sorrow for rebels against God, is natural and proper, but one might have thought that He would have spared His own Son, and that, in His case, there would be no learning of obedience by the things which he suffered.

But according to the text, Sonship did not exempt the Lord Jesus Christ from suffering. I want you to notice that, *in His case, the Sonship was very emphatic*. It was a relationship which was enjoyed by Him by nature. He was the Son of God or ever the worlds were made or time began. We know not how it was, neither may we attempt to explain the doctrine of the eternal Filiation, but assuredly, as long as there was a Father, there was a Son—and Jesus Christ has always been "the Son of the Highest."

Yet, though He were a Son, when He came and took upon Himself our nature, and appeared on earth, He was not exempted from learning obedience by the things which he suffered. In person He was august—He was the Heir of all things, the King of all kings, the King's Son as well as King Himself—and yet, notwithstanding the loftiness of His nature and the unspeakable majesty of His rank, He "learned obedience by the things which he suffered."

He was *the Son of God* in a very special sense even by His earthly birth, for the angel said to Mary, "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God."

You and I are the children of men, but Christ was the Son of God. “That which is born of the flesh is flesh,” and nothing better—and the best of parents have only fleshly, carnal children. There is not a word of Scripture to support the novel notion that some children are born so good that they do not need regeneration or conversion.

I do not wonder that, to patch up the figment of infant sprinkling, that lie should have been forged—and it is nothing but a lie—there is not an atom of truth at the back of it. Our Lord said to Nicodemus, “That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.” And Paul reminded the Ephesian Christians that they “were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.”

Men are not the children of God by any universal fatherhood—they must come to be so by being begotten again “unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.” This is not with us a matter of nature, but the gift of grace. “As many as received him, to them gave he power (the right or privilege) to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name.”

But our Lord Jesus Christ is the Son of God by birth and He is spotless in His nature. There is no corruption, no bias towards evil, no original sin, no taint of birth—nothing of the kind. He is the second Adam, but He has not participated in the evil of the first Adam. In Him there was nothing that even the prince of this world could discover with the keenest glance of his malicious eyes. And yet, though He was, in this respect, God’s Son above us all, born absolutely pure, “yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered.”

Further, *Christ was always God’s well-beloved Son*. Let us never forget that He was always a Son without any fault, concerning whom the Father’s testimony ever was, “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” We who have been made by grace the sons of God, are yet, alas! forgetful children, disobedient children, naughty children that deserve the rod.

But He never transgressed His Father’s command at any time. The law of God was ever in His heart and never did He turn aside from the path of right. His walk was perfect in all respects—no fault could be found with Him, and yet, though He was a perfect Son, a well-beloved Son, a Son who caused His Father no anger and no anxiety by anything that He did—He did not escape the rod. He must smart, must bleed, must even die. He must endure the utmost that human nature can endure.

God had one Son without sin, but He never had a son without sorrow. God had one Son without any taint in His nature, but He never had a Son without the smart which all nature feels. Even with the Son whose Sonship was of a far loftier kind than ours, the Son in whom was no imperfection whatsoever, it was still true that He “learned obedience by the things which he suffered,” and we may rest assured that it will be so with us also.

Further, *Christ was a Son whom God intended to honor beyond all His other sons*. After He had tarried awhile here, and descended lower and lower till He came even to the cross and to the tomb, yet God had decreed to lift Him up high above all the sons of men and to give Him a name which is above every name, and to set Him on the throne at His own right hand, that before Him principalities, and powers, and every living thing should bow.

Yet, though He was destined to such a place of honor, in the meantime He must learn obedience by the things He had to suffer. Those many crowns, which were to adorn His brow, could not exempt that head from a crown of thorns—nay, they entailed it. That scepter, the emblem of His universal sovereignty, could not keep His hands from the nails. Nay, those hands must bear the print of the nails before they could finally wield that scepter.

Though he lived such a life as He did, continually going about doing good, and though His life now is glorious beyond all conception, yet between those two lives He must die—and He must be able to say of Himself, “I am He that liveth, and was dead; and behold, I am alive forevermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death.”

Now, as there could be, even for Christ, no exemption from suffering, I gather that *there will be no exemption for any other child of God*. If the Lord has been pleased, in great mercy, to make us His children, to let us know that we are His children, and to give us a sweet sense of our adoption into His

family, we must not therefore conclude that we shall never suffer again. Oh, no! Our adoption does not take away from us the rod of the covenant.

You may not say, because you are certain that the Lord loves you, that therefore He will not allow you to be tried, because that is clearly contrary to the Scriptures. He Himself says, "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten." And Paul wrote to the Hebrews, "Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth."

Do not go upon a wrong tack, lest, by and by, you have to turn back and perhaps to pierce yourself through with many unnecessary sorrows. Do not say, "I may hope that I shall escape from trial because, through divine grace, my character has been kept clean." Dear friend, look well to your goings, for you are in a slippery path.

Pray that you may be perfect in every good work to do the Lord's will, but even if you are, do not conclude that you shall, therefore, have a life of ease. Your Master's footsteps were surer than yours are, yet the stones were sharp to His dear feet. He was purer in heart and conversation than you are, yet many arrows pierced His soul and reproach broke His heart.

God may, in His mercy, give you a long exemption from any severe affliction, but that will not be because your character is better than that of others, for it is written, "Every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit." If there are some others that He does not prune, He is sure to deal thus with the fruit-bearing branches.

So, perhaps, the more pure you are in your life, and the more you are doing for the honor of His name, the more you may feel the cutting of that sharp knife which takes away that excess of wood to which we are apt to run.

*"Did I meet no trials here,
No chastisement by the way,
Might I not, with reason, fear
I should prove a castaway?"*

Do not imagine that any amount of prayer will have the effect of staving off all trouble, for surely never did anyone pray like our Lord Jesus Christ did. He was a Son who held much communion with His Father.

*"Cold mountains and the midnight air
Witnessed the fervour of His prayer."*

His agony in Gethsemane was a time of the mightiest prayer that was ever heard in heaven, yet it was followed very closely by His death upon the cross. You may abound in prayer, and in thanksgiving, and in patience, and yet, for all that, all God's waves and billows may roll over you and you may be brought into the depths of soul-trouble.

Neither may you conclude, because you enjoy much of the divine favor and love, that therefore you will be screened from sorrow. You have, perhaps, dear friend, been honored in the church of God and there are many who love you for your works' sake, yet you may not, therefore, conclude that you will be without the rod. Nay, you may be certain that you will have it if nobody else does.

You have been rendered very useful in your own family and have seen your own children grow up in the fear of the Lord. That is a great blessing, but do not get into a fool's paradise and suppose that God has set a hedge about you so that the devil cannot come in to attack you. Remember that where Satan sees the hedge, he likes to try to break it down—and the case of Job has been a type of what has happened to many others.

Their children have been all round them and God has greatly prospered them, and therefore, for that very reason, they have been the objects of Satan's most malicious regard—and by and by, they have had to feel that the Lord tries the righteous—and that He puts the pure gold into the furnace, that He places the wheat on the threshing floor, and treads out the precious grain. And that He does not leave those

whom He loves to suffer by perpetual prosperity, as fine silver and gold would canker and corrupt if left to themselves.

So I leave that point with you, dear friends. The Sonship of our blessed Lord and Savior did not screen Him from suffering, therefore we cannot expect that our sonship, however clearly it may be proved, and whatever honor it may have brought to us, will screen us from sorrow and suffering.

II. My second thought is, perhaps, more pleasant than the former one, though indeed the first is like Samson's dead lion, full of honey to those who know how to get at it. The second lesson I learn from the text is that CHRIST'S SUFFERING DOES NOT MAR HIS SONSHIP, for, though He learned obedience by the things which he suffered, yet He was a Son all the while. Ah! and as much a Son in His deepest sorrow as He was before the eternal throne when every angel bowed before Him and delighted to do Him homage. His sufferings never affected His Sonship—He was still, always, as He must be forever and ever, the Son of God.

First, *His poverty did not disprove His Sonship*. Our blessed Lord was here in deep poverty. He said, "Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head." Yet He was the Son of God for all that. And you, dear friend, may be poorly clad and worn out by toil. You may not know where you will get shoes to cover your feet. You may be going home to a miserable, ill-furnished room, and as you look about you, you may feel as if you could say with Job, "Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither," for you seem to have nothing left you.

But beloved, if you are a child of God, your poverty does not affect that relationship. He who loves the Lord when in rags is as much the child of God as he will be when he shall put on the white raiment and stand amongst the shining ones above. "The Lord knoweth them that are his" as much in their rags as in their robes.

Next, *Christ's temptations did not affect His Sonship*. You remember how He was tempted of the devil. I will not dwell on the other temptations He had to endure, but there were the three in the desert. Satan knows how to tempt us and he usually begins at the most favorable moment for his evil purpose.

When our Lord was hungry, Satan came to Him and tempted Him to turn stones into bread. Did you ever notice that when you are hungry, Satan comes to you? He has a way of trying to strike us when we are down, the old coward that he is! He never gives us a fair opportunity of fighting with him, he takes every mean advantage that he possibly can.

So, when our Lord was faint with hunger, then Satan came to Him, and had the impudence to tempt Him in three several ways, each of the three comprehending various forms of temptation. In the wilderness, Christ was tempted in all points like as we are, yet He was without sin there as well as everywhere else.

But do you think that He was not a child of God because He was tempted? I want some of you to take this thought home to yourselves. When the devil was standing there and saying to Christ, "If thou be the Son of God," was there really any doubt about His Sonship? No. The answers which Jesus was giving to the tempter were amongst the strongest proofs that He was indeed the Son of God, for no one else could have answered the fiend as He answered him.

Now, dear friend, don't you ever say, "Because I am so much tempted, I cannot be a child of God." Why! a child of God may be tempted to self-murder, for Satan said to our Lord, when he had set Him on a pinnacle of the temple, "If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down." A child of God may be tempted even to worship the devil, for Jesus Christ was the Son of God when Satan said to Him, "All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me."

Yet all those temptations were in vain, for there was in His heart no tinder which the Satanic sparks could ignite. He was still the Son of God. So you, poor tempest-tossed, devil-driven heir of heaven, need not be dismayed, for the tempter's malice cannot destroy your sonship any more than it destroyed your Lord's.

Next, *Christ's endurance of slander did not jeopardize His Sonship*. Our Lord, in addition to being poor and tempted, was shamefully slandered. They said—only think of it—they said that He was "a

gluttonous man and a wine-bibber, a friend of publicans and sinners.” Yet this slander never made Him cease to be the Son of God—all the venom that they spat from their black mouths could not affect His Sonship in the least.

They went so far as to say, “He casteth out devils through Beelzebub, the chief of the devils,” as if He were in league with the arch-fiend. Oh, how could their foul hearts conceive such a thing? How dared their false lips utter such a calumny? It did not, however, hurt Him—He was just as much the Son of God as ever. Though they mocked Him even in His dying agonies, yet their jests and jeers did not tear Him from His Father’s heart nor lead Him to question His Sonship.

And I want you, who, perhaps, have been cruelly slandered and have had all manner of evil spoken against you falsely for Christ’s name’s sake, to feel that, notwithstanding all that may be said, the Lord knows them that are His and He can see their beauties through the mud with which the world bespatters them, and in due time, He will clear their character of all that is now laid to their charge.

Our Lord Jesus does not think any the worse of His people because of what is said against them. But He says to them, “Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.”

Further, *the desertion of all Christ’s friends did not invalidate His Sonship*. Our blessed Master found the man who had eaten bread with Him lifting up his heel against Him. Judas betrayed Him, Peter denied that he knew Him, John and all the rest of the apostles forsook Him and fled. If we have to endure such painful experiences, we are very apt, at such times, to begin to say, “Have all these good men turned against me—those who used to pray with me, who walked to the house of God with me—do they all give me the cold shoulder and all believe ill reports against me? Surely, then, I cannot be a child of God.”

Ah, my dear friend! you may be none the less dear to the heart of God, none the less accepted in the Beloved though all this should come upon you. It is a very bitter thing to have to bear if you have walked in uprightness and kept your footsteps from the way of the destroyer, but your Master had to bear it before you—and His Sonship was not affected by it, nor will yours be.

Even the felon’s death on the cross cast no doubt upon Christ’s Sonship. Crucifixion was the most shameful and disgraceful mode of execution then practiced, yet He was the Son of God even upon the cross. Did not the centurion, who was on duty there, say of Him, “Truly this was the Son of God”? And you and I know that He was never more seen to be the Son of God than when He surrendered Himself to His Father’s will that He might bear our sins in His own body on the tree, being made a curse for us, as it is written, “Cursed is everyone that hangeth on a tree.”

Well, now, if it should ever come to pass that a child of God should die under reproach, if wicked men should put him to a death of shame, and his name should be cast out as evil, that will not mar his sonship in the least. No, methinks that God never had any children that were more precious in His sight than those who died at the stake or the block for Him.

How fair their faces must have looked to Him when they were scorched with the flames! Such love as theirs, which led them cheerfully to burn to death—and none of us can imagine what the pain of that form of martyrdom must have been—the love which enabled them to rejoice in God, even then, must have been most acceptable to their Lord.

Do not let us think, then, that any degree of poverty, or pain, or temptation, or slander, or shame, or even death itself, can affect the sonship of one who is really a child of God. Let us lay hold of this sweet reflection and never let it go. Thus we have seen that Christ’s Sonship did not exempt Him from suffering, but that His suffering did not mar His Sonship.

III. So I follow with my third observation, which is, that OBEDIENCE IS A THING WHICH HAS TO BE LEARNED EVEN BY SONS.

Though Jesus was a Son, yet He learned obedience. As God, our Savior knew everything. As God, however, He did not obey. It was in His complex character as our Mediator that He learned to obey.

Perhaps some of you are asking, “But why can we not obey without learning obedience?” The reason is, first, *because obedience has to be learned experientially*. If a man is to learn a trade thoroughly, he must be apprenticed to it. A soldier, sitting at home and reading books, will not learn the deadly art of war. He must go to the barracks, and the camp, and the field of battle if he is to win victories and become a veteran.

The dry land sailor, who never went even in a boat, would not know much about navigation, study hard as he might—he must go to sea to be a sailor. So, obedience is a trade to which a man must be apprenticed until he has learned it, for it is not to be known in any other way. Even our blessed Lord could not have fully learned obedience by the observation in others of such an obedience as He had personally to render, for there was no one from whom He could thus learn.

“Why!” somebody says, “He might have learned obedience from the angels, who do God’s commandments, hearkening unto the voice of his word.” Ah, but angels had never suffered! They have not bodies like ours, full of infirmities. And that kind of passive obedience, which our Savior had mainly to render, is not required of them.

Angels could not be “obedient unto death, even the death of the cross,” so that our Lord Jesus could not see in them such an obedience as He had covenanted to render on behalf of His people, when He engaged to stand in their stead, and to keep the law of God which they could not keep. He could not learn obedience by observation—He must learn it by experience. What was to be done, what was to be suffered—He must learn by doing it and suffering it.

It was in the doing of it that He became actually, personally, experientially acquainted with what was meant by perfect obedience to the will of God. And He did it, brethren. He went right through with that lesson until He had learned obedience. He was getting near to the end of His great task when He said, “Not as I will, but as thou wilt.”

But He had fully learned it when He said, “It is finished.” He had come to the last line of His lesson—He knew it thoroughly, He had learned obedience. He had to learn obedience in order that He might save us, for it was God’s “righteous Servant” who was to “justify many.”

Why have you and I, dear friends, to learn obedience? *Because there is no way of obtaining true happiness but by obedience.* Sin always has sorrow at the tail of it. Happiness is obedience and obedience is happiness. If we do the will of the Lord thoroughly, then are we delivered from all evil, and enter into the joy of our Lord.

We also have to learn obedience because there could be no heaven without it. We hope to go on obeying our Lord forever and ever. Up yonder, in the heaven of glorified spirits, there is perfect obedience to the will of God—and you and I expect to go there, so we need to learn the music here until we know it and can join the choirs above without creating discord.

We are going through our practice and rehearsals now. It takes a great deal of time and patience to teach even some Christian people obedience, for so many of them like to be masters rather than servants. There are some bodies of professing Christians who give no heed to Paul’s injunction, “Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account.”

Church discipline and the duties of the pastoral office, they ignore, though they are clearly enjoined in the New Testament. They all like to be masters and everybody must have his say—but as to submission to authority, they will not hear of it. There are some people who would be excellent Christians if Christianity consisted in having their own way and gaining honor for themselves, but as to making themselves the servants of others for Christ’s sake, or watching over others for their good—and being content to be made of no reputation in order that other people might be uplifted—they do not go in for that sort of thing. Clearly, they have not learned obedience.

I fear that we have none of us learnt it as we ought—we are too masterful, too big, too proud. We cannot say, with David, “My soul is even as a weaned child.” Many of us are more like a weaning child,

crying, fretting, rebelling. We have not laid all our wishes at Jesus' feet and said to Him, "Not my will, but thine be done."

But it is essential that we should come to this point—we should not be fit for heaven if we did not, for all the spirits before the throne of God bow submissively to the will of God. They have neither wish nor desire apart from God's will. They have no wandering ambitions, no selfish aims. Their every thought is brought into captivity to the will of God. Let us pray for this—"Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven. And let it be done in our hearts, good Lord, or else we shall never be fit to enter there."

IV. My last observation upon the text is this—THE OBEDIENCE WE HAVE BEEN SPEAKING OF IS NOT TO BE LEARNED EXCEPT BY SUFFERING.

Though Christ was the Son of God, yet even He learned obedience through suffering. Not even through His silent studies by night, nor His active engagements by day, did He learn it—suffering had to be superadded to all this before He could become proficient in obedience. What was the reason for this?

I suppose it must be *because suffering touches a man's own self*. Satan thought so, for when God said of Job that he was a perfect and an upright man, Satan answered, "Hast not thou made an hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he has on every side? thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his substance is increased in the land. But put forth thine hand now, and touch all that he hath, and he will curse thee to thy face."

Satan was mistaken in the result, but he was wise in his suggestion that personal losses do come home to us. And the arch-enemy knew what he was at when he said to God, "Put forth thine hand now, and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will curse thee to thy face." He knew what is the weak point in most men. There are some who can obey God actively—it is their delight to be almost day and night engaged in His service—but when their bone and flesh are touched, their patience is sorely tried, and it is a hard lesson for them to learn to obey God's will.

Have we all, beloved, learned obedience yet? Have we not been trying to pick and choose our own way? It is not the cry of obedience to say, "Lord, give me health and strength, and I will be Your servant." But can you truly say, "Give me weakness and ill-health, and I will still be Your servant"? Have you not said, "Lord, let me run on Your errands, uphill and downhill, I will be Your servant"? And will you not as readily say, "If You break all my bones, and lay me for half a century upon a bed of pain, I will still be Your servant—anywhere, everywhere, I make no reserve—I am but flesh and blood, yet do as You will with me though it may mean great suffering"?

I think obedience is never fully learned until, in suffering, *our graces are put into the fire and tested*. Neither love, nor faith, can very well be tried to the full until there is a bitter medicine to drink. Then we take it in love and believe that it will work for our good—and thus we prove that our love and our faith are genuine.

Suffering goes to the very root of our religion. Some people think they have a great deal of love, and joy, and spiritual-mindedness, and they look down on some of God's poor tried saints. Yes, yes, but you get where they are, and see whether you will not then look up to them, and wish you were half as good as they are.

I have heard brethren talk about their own perfections and of the tried child of God who has a hard struggle between flesh and spirit—and they have reminded me of that passage in the Book of Ezekiel where we are told that the fat cattle pushed with horns and shoulders, and hurt the weak cattle, and God said that He would judge them for this.

I am glad if you, dear friend, enjoy unbroken peace. You have, however, a strong constitution and you owe a good deal more of the sanctity you talk of to health and to prosperity in business than you imagine. Peradventure, if you were as sick, as tried, and as poor as some of your fellow Christians, you would not find that you had any more grace than they have, peradventure you might have even less.

A man who has never been on board ship, says, "I am a splendid sailor." I have often heard such boasting, but I have seen that same gentleman, when we had started only a quarter of an hour, and he has learned that there is not so much of the sailor in him as he thought. In a similar manner, some people are

fine Christians until they are tried and proved. They never have any doubt or fear whatever—but put them in the circumstances of others of God's children and they are the very first to show signs of weakness.

Peter said to his Lord, "Though I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee." Bravo, Peter. But wait till you hear that cock crow! What a change between Peter weeping bitterly outside the door and Peter bragging a little while ago! Which Peter do you prefer? I like the one with the tears in his eyes far better than the other—there is more tender, genuine truth about him.

Trials blow away the chaff and the froth. They let a man know how much of the metal is tin and how much is gold. They reveal what is the work of God and what is mere nature. They make a man see whether he really is all that he thinks he is. And consequently, we shall never come to a perfect obedience until we have passed through suffering, for so only is it to be learned.

Perhaps *the last moments before our death will teach us something concerning obedience which is not to be learned in the rest of life.* I know not, but it may be that those last hours before the spirit shall be severed from the body will teach us, once for all, what is the casting of the soul on God in all its fullness and the entering of the soul into communion with God in all its blessedness.

At any rate, whatever it costs us to learn obedience, it will never cost us so much as it cost our Lord—"Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered." Go, then, brothers and sisters, back to your school still to learn until, like your Master, you can say, "It is finished." And bless God for every suffering that comes to you, for it will be part of your preparation for the happinesses of eternity. God bless you, for Christ's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITIONS BY C. H. SPURGEON

JOHN 7:1-13 AND HEBREWS 5

John 7:1-5. *After these things Jesus walked in Galilee: for he would not walk in Jewry, because the Jews sought to kill him. Now the Jews' feast of tabernacles was at hand. His brethren therefore said unto him, Depart hence, and go into Judaea, that thy disciples also may see the works that thou doest. For there is no man that doeth any thing in secret, and he himself seeketh to be known openly. If thou do these things, shew thyself to the world. For neither did his brethren believe in him.*

It is a very painful truth, that those who were the near relations of the Savior were not believers in His divine mission—at any rate, at first. He was truly a prophet who was without honor in His own country and among His own kindred. And on this occasion, they half taunted Him concerning His claims.

In effect, they said to Him, "If indeed You are a prophet, get out into the world and prove it. We hear that You profess to work miracles, then, why do You hide Yourself away in this country place down here in Galilee? Begone to Jerusalem and perform Your wonders before the crowds in the capital"—half hoping, perhaps, that His claims might prove to be true, yet not, at that time, at any rate, being themselves willing to become His disciples.

See how perverse is the human heart. These men might even live in close companionship with Christ and even be nearly related to Him after the flesh, and yet not be converted to Him. So the best of men need not wonder if they have unconverted relatives, and we may not feel certain that there is any fault to be found in their example if others are not converted by it, for, certainly, there was no fault in the example of Christ, yet "neither did his brethren believe in him."

Mark, also, that no earthly relationship is of any avail in the kingdom of heaven—"for neither did his brethren believe in him." So that, although I may be the child of godly parents and one born of a long line of saints, yet I am, because of that, no nearer to the kingdom unless I become myself a believer in Christ.

Remember what Peter said on the day of Pentecost. You have often heard that passage of Scripture half-quoted, let me quote the whole of it to you—"For the promise is unto you, and to your children." If you stop there, you do not get the true sense of it. "The promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call." Therefore, that text teaches that there is no distinction between the children of believers and any other children. We must be called by the grace of God like the far-off ones, or else we shall not inherit eternal life.

6-8. *Then Jesus said unto them, My time is not yet come: but your time is alway ready. The world cannot hate you; but me it hateth, because I testify of it, that the works thereof are evil. Go ye up unto this feast: I go not up yet unto this feast; for my time is not yet full come.*

Our Lord Jesus Christ did everything, as it were, by the clock. His life was an orderly one. It was all arranged in the eternal purpose of God. The very day in which He should go up to Jerusalem was marked down and He took care that He did not go before the right time. Now, half the power of a Christian life depends upon its being timely. The bringing forth of fruit in due season is one of the marks of the tree planted by the rivers of water. And one of the signs of the Son of man, who delighted in the law of the Lord, was that He said, "My time is not yet full come." When it did come, then He went.

9-10. *When he had said these words unto them, he abode still in Galilee. But when his brethren were gone up, then went he also up unto the feast, not openly, but as it were in secret.*

Not with the great caravan that traveled, sometimes, with tens of thousands of people together going up to the feast, but with His own disciples in a quieter way.

11-13. *Then the Jews sought him at the feast, and said, Where is he? And there was much murmuring among the people concerning him: for some said, He is a good man: others said, Nay; but he deceiveth the people. Howbeit no man spake openly of him for fear of the Jews.*

There was a general fear of violence that would come upon any who professed themselves to be His followers.

Now turn to Paul's epistle to the Hebrews, the fifth chapter.

Hebrews 5:1-5. *For every high priest taken from among men is ordained for men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins: who can have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way; for that he himself also is compassed with infirmity. And by reason hereof he ought, as for the people, so also for himself, to offer for sins. And no man taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron. So also Christ glorified not himself to be made an high priest; but he that said unto him, Thou art my Son, to day have I begotten thee.*

What a comfort this is to us, that we have a High Priest through whom we can come to God, who is full of compassion toward us and who, though He had no sinful infirmity about Him, was subject to the infirmities to which flesh is heir!

6-9. *As he saith also in another place, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec. Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared; though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; and being made perfect,*

That is, in His official character.

9-14. *He became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him; called of God an high priest after the order of Melchisedec. Of whom we have many things to say, and hard to be uttered, seeing ye are dull of hearing. For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. For every one that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.*

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—750, 748

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